

This year, the world celebrates the 50th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel, and we also congratulate the pioneering Florida-Israel Institute on its 10-year anniversary.

The Florida-Israel Institute, created by the Florida Legislature in 1988 to expand ties with Israel, has been a success by any measure:

Catalyst. Now 23 other states have official links with Israel. Florida set the pace, and its Florida-Israel Institute continues to serve as a model for the rest of the nation.

Trade boom. Total trade between Florida and Israel tripled between 1987 and 1996, with dramatic increases in exports from Florida to Israel and imports from Israel, according to federal statistics.

Cultural bridge. The Florida-Israel Institute brings Israel to Florida and Florida to Israel, via the arts, business, academia and research on topics of mutual interest that include agriculture and the environment.

Examples span the spectrum of the human experience. The Institute brought Israeli jazz pianist Liz Magnes to Florida, and sent Florida professors to Israel and Jordan. It helped sponsor the one-woman show "Nomi" at the University of Central Florida, and sent Florida business leaders to Israel.

A premier feature of the Florida-Israel Institute is scholarship. The Institute carries out the time-honored precept that knowledge is a key to human understanding and a powerful weapon against fear and hate.

The Florida-Israel Institute just awarded scholarships to 57 Israeli students for the 1998-99 academic year. These students will study on campuses throughout Florida, enriching campus life for all and then serving as ambassadors for life, linking Florida and Israel. The Institute—co-hosted by Florida Atlantic University and Broward Community College—has strong roots in education.

As a repeat visitor to the Middle East, I know there is no substitute for first-hand experience in understanding the challenges facing Israel. My wife, Adele, and I were honored to return to Israel this year to help celebrate the 50th anniversary.

Likewise, the Florida academics, entrepreneurs and civic leaders who visit Israel—thanks to the Florida-Israel Institute—bring back a keener understanding and a deeper appreciation of our special relationship with our ally State, Israel.

On this special 10-year milestone, I call on my colleagues to join me in saluting the founders, managers and advisory board of this exemplary public-private partnership: the Florida-Israel Institute.●

TRIBUTE TO THE ARGUS CHAMPION

● Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, Not too many businesses last a generation or two, much less for 175 years, but the

Argus Champion seems to be Energizer Bunny of the newspaper business. This longevity, which is rare, is due primarily to its commitment to the local community. The Argus Champion has served its community well by providing local news and national news of interest. As a result, the Argus Champion has developed a loyal following in its hometown of Newport and the surrounding areas.

Although the paper has had numerous owners, editors, reporters, and staff over the years, the Argus Champion has consistently published a high-quality newspaper that reflects New Hampshire's traditions and heritage. The paper also has changed with the times, switching to color formats in 1997 and expanding news coverage in surrounding areas in an effort to bring a better product to more Granite Staters.

In many ways, our local newspaper is the chronicler of the times, printing important stories about the local community and the people who live in it. The Argus itself recognizes this special role, and each week offers to its readers a variety of local historical information through a feature column. We look forward to seeing pictures of our neighbors and their children volunteering to raise money for a worthwhile cause, or participating in the Boys and Girls Scouts and the Little League Baseball team. We also value our local paper for all of the announcements about milestones in our lives, including weddings, births, deaths, promotions, and others. We also appreciate the political coverage provided to the community as it helps the voters make informed decisions in the ballot booth and understand how the actions of their elected officials affect their everyday lives.

The Argus Champion has brought the community together by focusing on local news and it is that tradition that we celebrate today on the 175th Anniversary of the paper's beginning. A warm congratulations to all of those who have contributed to the success of the Argus Champion and best wishes for the future.●

TRIBUTE TO SISTER MARY MERCIA MORAN, R.S.M.

● Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to an outstanding woman in Rhode Island, Sister Mary Mercia Moran, R.S.M., who is celebrating her 50th year as a Religious Sister of Mercy.

Originally from New York City, Sister Mary Mercia entered the Religious Sisters of Mercy in Providence on September 8, 1948. She made her Final Profession on August 15, 1954. Sister Mary Mercia has dedicated her life to educating the children of the Diocese of Providence. Since 1951, she has taught at several schools including: St. Patrick in Providence, St. Matthew in Cranston, St. Mary in Pawtucket and St. Brendan in East Providence. Since 1967, Sister Mary Mercia has been teaching

Second Grade at Sacred Heart School in East Providence.

I was fortunate enough to be her student at St. Matthew's School. She was, and is, an inspiring, demanding, and nurturing teacher. Generations of Rhode Island children have prospered because of her faithful dedication.

Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in commending Sister Mary Mercia for her many contributions to the children of Rhode Island and selfless dedication to helping others. ●

MARRIAGE PENALTY TAX

● Mr. FAIRCLOTH. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to support the elimination of the marriage penalty tax. Our nation has recently witnessed violent assaults on children at school, an explosion of sexually explicit material on television and the Internet, and increasingly plentiful and inexpensive drugs. Now more than ever, our nation needs strong families.

Unfortunately, our tax code encourages just the opposite. It discourages marriage and places an undue financial burden on couples, simply for being married. According to the Congressional Budget Office, 21 million married couples paid an average of \$1,400 more in income taxes in 1996 than they would have if they were single. This "marriage penalty" is immoral and patently unfair. We are sending the wrong message to the American people, and it's time for Congress to take action.

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues in the Senate to support the elimination of the marriage penalty tax as the centerpiece of upcoming tax legislation.●

COMMEMORATION OF SEPTEMBER'S HEALTH-RELATED EVENTS

● Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise today to highlight National Caregivers Day.

As such, I wanted to show my appreciation to those who work so hard to meet the needs of the mentally and physically disabled, the elderly, and the terminally ill. Our nation is blessed to have individuals motivated by a caring and giving attitude toward others.

Indeed, there are roughly 1.6 million elderly and disabled people in our nation receiving care in one of approximately 16,800 facilities throughout the country and countless others providing in-home assistance. These thousands of individuals live each day loving, nurturing, and supporting those entrusted to their care and on behalf of the United States Senate, I want to say thank you.

Mr. President, I would also like to recognize other health-care related commemorations in the month of September: National Rehabilitation Week, Mental Health Workers Week, National Vision Rehabilitation Day, and Deaf Awareness Week.